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SECONDARY EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES¹

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

THE HIGH SCHOOL PERIOD² — *continued*

We do not know how the "English Classical School" came to be the "English High School." The latter title appears for the first time on the records of the School Committee in the resolution given above. It is not impossible that this vote of June 23, 1824, was expressly intended, among other things, to bestow the designation of "High School;" or, there may have been an earlier resolution upon the same subject which failed through some mischance to find its proper place in the secretary's minutes. It was a time of new things in Boston. The town became a city on May 1, 1822. Josiah Quincy, its second mayor, was at the head of its government from 1823 to 1828. He was a man of positive convictions, and devoted himself assiduously to municipal affairs. Under the city government, until 1835, the mayor and board of aldermen were members *ex officio* of the School Committee. Mr. Quincy's own account of the establishment of the school reads as follows: "In 1820 an English classical school was established, having for its object to enable the mercantile and mechanical classes to obtain an education adapted for those children whom their parents wished to qualify for active life, and thus relieve them from the necessity of incurring the expense incident to private academies."³ It may be surmised that his own unfortunate experience at the Phillips Andover Academy, in the first years of its existence, may have pointed Mr. Quincy's reference to the school as a substitute for the academy.⁴ He certainly interested himself in its

¹ Copyright, 1897, by Elmer E. Brown.

² Continued from January number.

³ QUINCY, *A municipal history of the town and city of Boston*. Boston: Little & Brown, 1852; pp. 21, 22.

⁴ See EDMUND QUINCY, *Life of Josiah Quincy of Massachusetts*. Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869; pp. 24, 25.

affairs; and, while still mayor, was deep in the controversy relating to the high school for girls. He may have had much or little to do with the change of name of the English Classical School: but it seems not improbable that he was concerned with the change; that the new name was adopted in imitation of the Edinburgh High School; and that one channel through which the influence of the Edinburgh institution reached Boston was John Griscom's account of his visit to the Scotch capital.*

John Griscom was a Quaker, living in New York, a man of scientific tastes and of respectable attainments in chemistry, a shrewd and sympathetic observer of men and institutions. He traveled extensively in Europe, and on his return published in two volumes an account of his observations. This work was noticed at some length in the *North American Review* for January 1824. The *Review* was at that time published in Boston.

Professor Griscom (he was professor of chemistry and natural philosophy in the "New York Institution") interested himself in European movements for ameliorating the condition of the poor and of the criminal class. He devotes considerable attention in the account of his travels to Mrs. Fry's work in the Newgate prison. On his return to America he was instrumental in securing the establishment of a house of refuge for juvenile delinquents in New York. Mr. Quincy, in the face of much opposition, brought about the establishment of a similar institution for the city of Boston.

In Edinburgh, Mr. Griscom made the acquaintance of Dr. Pillans, later Professor in the University of Edinburgh, but at that time rector of the High School. This school interested the American visitor greatly, and his account of it is reproduced *verbatim* in the article already referred to, in the *North American Review*. But both the author and the reviewer were especially interested in the fact that Dr. Pillans was employing the monitorial system in the conduct of his school. The Bell-Lancaster controversy was in full swing in Great Britain, and many

* GRISCOM, *A year in Europe, comprising a journal of observations in England, Scotland, Ireland, France, Switzerland, the north of Italy, and Holland. In 1818 and 1819.* New York: 1823; 2 vols.

ardent schoolmen on this side of the water were coming to believe that Lancasterian schools would solve the problem of financiering a complete system of popular education. The State of New York, at the prompting of Governor De Witt Clinton, had entered into a general Lancasterian movement in the second decade of this century. Massachusetts was more conservative, but numerous schools of the same type began to spring up within her borders in the twenties. Yet there had appeared but little disposition on either side of the water to extend the system to secondary schools; and the great apparent success of Dr. Pillans' experiment in the Edinburgh High School commanded thoughtful attention. The reviewer remarks "that the city of Boston, which makes, we doubt not, in proportion to its means, a more honorable exertion for the instruction of its own community, and is rewarded by a more excellent success than any other city of equal size in the world, pays at least twice as much for the instruction of a boy in its admirable Latin School, as is paid for the instruction of a boy at the High School, in the more expensive city of Edinburgh;" and makes a conservative suggestion that those who have the management of public instruction inquire into the practicability of adopting some portions of the system of mutual instruction.

Mayor Quincy, or any other member of the Boston School Committee, may easily have gained a knowledge of the Edinburgh High School from the *Year in Europe* or from the notice of the work in the *Review*. But we have, in addition to this surmise, direct evidence of the Mayor's personal acquaintance with Professor Griscom, and of communication between them on the subject of education. In his autobiography, edited by his son, we find Professor Griscom writing as follows: "It was, I believe, during a former visit to Boston, that I was called upon at my lodgings by the then mayor (Josiah Quincy, who invited me to take a seat in his carriage, and accompany him in a visit to the public schools, and to the anniversary dinner given at the close of the examinations to those of the scholars in the various schools who had most distinguished themselves by industry and good behavior. A large company, consisting of the school com-

mittees and gentlemen of the city, attended the dinner, which was given in Faneuil Hall, the large room of which was well filled. The boys that had been selected from the schools, as recipients of his honor, were seated at a long table somewhat elevated above the company, and never, probably, did they partake of a dinner in a more hilarious state of feeling than on this occasion. Such a remarkable and popular acknowledgment of their merits can hardly fail to operate as a powerful stimulant to exertion through the course of their school year. Prior to the visit to Boston now alluded to, I had had a correspondence with Josiah Quincy relative to the principles upon which our New York High School was conducted."¹

Professor Griscom's visit to the Edinburgh High School is noted as an interesting event by Dr. Steven, the historian of that school. He says :

Dr. Griscom, a learned American professor, who spent several days in Edinburgh during the spring of 1819, has presented his countrymen with full details relative to the working of the High School system, and has passed no common eulogium on the very efficient manner in which the masters performed their duty. [Then follows an extended quotation from Griscom's *Year in Europe*.] The result of Dr. Griscom's visit to Edinburgh was the establishment of a classical seminary, at New York, on the model of the Scottish metropolitan High School."²

Professor Griscom proposed the establishment of this New York school about a year after his return from Europe,³ that is, some time in the year 1820, or possibly 1821. We find him writing to Professor Pillans under date of August 9, 1821: "I am aware that in attempting to imitate your school, especially at this distance and in this country, one formidable difficulty will appear at the very threshold. We may learn the system, but where shall we get the man?" And fourteen months later

¹ JOHN H. GRISCOM, M.D. *Memoir of John Griscom, LL.D., late professor of chemistry and natural philosophy; with an account of the New York High School; Society for the Prevention of Pauperism; The House of Refuge; and other institutions. Compiled from an Autobiography, and other sources.* New York: Robert Carter and Brothers. 1859. Pp. 240, 241.

² WILLIAM STEVEN, D.D. *The history of the High School of Edinburgh.* Edinburgh: MDCCCXLIX. Pp. 192-194.

³ *Memoir of John Griscom*, p. 210.

he wrote to Professor Pillans again, concerning the opposition to new school on the part of the teachers of New York City, "who naturally dread the effect of such as establishment upon their high prices, and from Columbia College, who seem to apprehend in it a rival institution."¹

But in spite of opposition, a board of trustees was finally incorporated under the title of the "High School Society," and the "High School for Boys" established under their auspices was opened on the first of March, 1825.

The history of this incorporated "High School" in New York can be traced for several years, in a series of published reports. They are well edited and make interesting readers. The school received over 600 scholars the first year. The same society opened a "Female High School" February 1, 1826. The monitorial system was employed in these schools, but apparently with more reserve and caution in the higher than in the lower classes. The following statement as to studies is taken from the first report :

It should never be forgotten that the grand object of this institution is to prepare the boys for such farther advancement, and such pursuits in life, as they are destined to after leaving it. All who enter the school do not intend to remain for the same period of time—and many who leave it expect to enter immediately upon the active business of life. It is very plain that these circumstances must require corresponding classifications of scholars and of studies.

Some pursuits are nevertheless common to all. All the scholars in this department attend to Spelling, Writing, Arithmetic, Geography, Elocution, Composition, Drawing, Philosophy, Natural History, and Book-keeping. Philosophy and Natural History are taught chiefly by lectures and by questions; and these branches, together with Elocution and Composition, are severally attended to one day in every week."²

The fourth report contains a biographical sketch of Daniel H. Barnes, associate principal of the school, whose life had been lost in a stage-coach accident. The following passage may be quoted :

He had satisfied himself of the value of this system by trial on a small scale in his own private classes, when his confidence in its efficacy was

¹ *Idem*, p. 204.

² *First Annual Report of the Trustees of the High-School Society, in the City of New York*. New York: Printed by Mahlon Day, 1825. Pp. 6, 7.

increased by its successful application in the High School of Edinburgh by Professor Pellans, as well as by the attestations of Drs. Mann and D'Oyley to its use in the Charter-House School of London.

He therefore eagerly co-operated in the foundation of the High School for Boys in 1824.¹

The school continued in operation "until about the close of the year 1831. Its operation may be considered as decidedly successful. There were about 400 pupils in it at the time of its closing, and among them were children of the most respectable families in the city. It was, I believe, at the time of its institution, the first and only pay school in this country established on the *professed* principle of cheap and efficient instruction, based on the condition of the adoption and employment of the monitorial system, by which one teacher can communicate his knowledge to large numbers of pupils."²

To Dr. Steven, Professor Griscom wrote: "The High School of New York, which, for four or five years after its establishment, was one of the most flourishing institutions in the United States, has become defunct, in consequence mainly of a defective organization relative to its pecuniary interests."³ It seems clear that Griscom was mistaken in seizing upon the use of the monitorial system as the characteristic thing about the Edinburgh school and the secret of its marked success. The monitorial system was a device for economizing expenditures. But the characteristic aspect of the Edinburgh institution was its intimate connection with the municipality in which it was located, as regards both financial and moral support. The New York school, lacking such connection and having no regular endowment, prospered for a time and then went down.

It would appear that the term *high school* was already in use in a limited way in Pennsylvania. Mr. Wickersham applies this designation to a school established at Germantown in 1761,⁴ and

¹ *Fourth Annual Report of the Trustees of the High-School Society of New York, made on Saturday, November 29, 1828. Pursuant to the Act of Incorporation.* New York: 1828. Pp. 10, 11.

² From Griscom's autobiography. *Memoir of John Griscom*, p. 212.

³ *History of the High School of Edinburgh*, p. 194, footnote.

⁴ WICKERSHAM, *A history of education in Pennsylvania*, p. 142.

carried on successfully for some years thereafter; and to another opened in 1764 by the Schwenckfelders, in Berks county, later removed to Montgomery county, and maintained with a good degree of success for two generations.¹ The latter school was started with a subscription aggregating £600, a part of which fund was passed on to the public schools when a state system was finally established in Pennsylvania. Latin, Greek, and the higher mathematics were taught in its classes.

It is evident that these Pennsylvania schools were not high schools of the modern type; and I see no reason to suppose that they exercised any influence as regards the general use of the designation applied to them. If they were called "high schools" by their founders, it is altogether likely that the name was derived from the German *Hochschule*, a term used somewhat indefinitely to designate a school of advanced grade.

Returning to Boston affairs, we note that dissatisfaction with the original name of the new school had appeared in 1823. The Prize Book of the Latin School published in that year contains an admirable account of the free schools of Boston. The part relating to the school we have under consideration opens with the following paragraph:

Public opinion and the wants of a large class of citizens of this town have long been calling for a school in which those, who have either not the desire or the means of obtaining a classical education, might receive instruction in many branches of great practical importance which have usually been taught only at the colleges. This led to the establishment of the English Classical School.

A footnote to the last sentence contains the following comment:

This is as far as possible from being what its name indicates, as the classics, properly so-called, are not taught, nor any knowledge of their languages required. It is hoped that an enlightened board of school committee will find some more appropriate name for this school, and not suffer so erroneous a use of terms to prevail among the youth of Boston.²

We have seen that the desired change was made, whether with or without official sanction, in 1824, and that the name

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

² *The Prize Book, No. IV, of the Public Latin School in Boston.* Boston: Published by Cummings, Hilliard & Co., 1823. P. 16.

employed from that time on was the same as the school now bears. But at one time the use of the earlier designation was resumed, as appears from the records of the School Committee. At a meeting held on March 93, 1832, the sub-committee of the English High School reported :

Your committee, among other things being instructed to consider and report upon the expediency of restoring to said school its original name "English Classical School" have attended to this branch of duty assigned them, and further report :

That this school was instituted under that name by the inhabitants of Boston for that special purpose assembled in town meeting in Faneuil Hall on the 15th day of January 1821 ; its name therefore being given by the people in their corporate capacity, it cannot be altered by the agents of the people, except duly authorized by them for that purpose. No such authority that your committee can find having been granted, the only proper and legal title by which it can be known is that given it by the town, of "English Classical School." Your committee therefore recommend that the name be used and applied to it ; and that for the future it be known by this and no other appellation.

Your committee are confirmed in this conclusion not only because its true legitimate name is more significant and appropriate than that now used, but because, on searching the records of the board, they can find no vote authorizing the application of the present name as a substitute for that given it by the town ; consequently it is now misnamed, and the misnomer is used without any authority from any source whatever.

But we find that, at a meeting of the School Committee held February 12, 1833, it was "Ordered, That the vote passed March 13, 1832, changing the name of the school in Pinckney St. be and hereby is repealed ; and that the name by which it has always been designated in the records and in the regulations of the board since the year 1824, be restored, viz. English High School."

The school has continued to the present day to bear the name thus formally approved.

It seems to me now established, at least to a high degree of probability, that it took its new name from the high school at Edinburgh.¹ But it does not seem to have followed after the

¹ When the Public School Society of New York made their appeal, in 1828, for means wherewith to establish a high school, the examples to which they pointed in support of their plan were those of Edinburgh and Boston : "The means of instruc-

older school in other respects. I have not found evidence that the system of mutual instruction was ever introduced into the English High School. Moreover, the instruction in the ancient classics, which was—and I suppose still is—the most marked feature of the Edinburgh school, was not introduced into the English High School at all in the earlier days. The contrast between the two schools in this particular is brought out sharply by another passage in Griscom's account. He says :

Although the system of instruction adopted in the high school is professedly intended to be chiefly classical ; [Pillans] remarked that he should think himself very deficient in his duty in teaching the boys only Latin and Greek, and omitting to avail himself of every suitable occasion to inculcate moral truth, and to excite them to intellectual exertion. This he regards as one of the most important advantages of classical instruction. He thinks it might be practicable to frame a course of English study that would be equally efficacious in training the mind to the pursuit of knowledge, and in disciplining its powers to a close and vigorous application ; but such a course of study would be exceedingly unpopular in Scotland.¹

The ideas embodied in the English High School, then, cannot be traced to the High School of Edinburgh, however much the rector of that school at the time may have been disposed to

tion, which are offered to the poor, should be the very best which can be provided. They may not all be able to proceed so far in the path of learning as others in happier circumstances. But to the extent of their progress, let them have all the helps which the present state of knowledge affords. This is no mere fanciful theory. The advantages of a free intercourse and competition between persons of all ranks and conditions in life, as exhibited in the Edinburgh high school, have been admirably illustrated by one of the first British orators of the age. He regarded such an institution as invaluable in a free state, because, to use his own language, men of the highest and lowest rank in the community sent their children there to be educated together. The practical beneficence of this system is attested by the noble institutions of a sister city."—*An Address of the trustees of the Public School Society in the City of New York, to their fellow-citizens, respecting the extension of their public schools.* New York : 1828 : p. 11.

The "sister city" is undoubtedly Boston, which is elsewhere mentioned by name in the same document. The British orator referred to Lord Brougham, who had been an Edinburgh High-School boy. The remarks quoted from him were uttered at the great entertainment given in his honor in Edinburgh in 1825. The passage is given at length by STEVEN, *Op. cit.*, pp. 212, 213. It is worth noting, at this point that Lord Brougham's *Practical Observations upon the Education of the People*, which ran through twenty editions in the year of its publication (1825), was reprinted the following year in Boston.

¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 365, 366.

look favorably on such ideas. In so far as they were drawn from institutions then existing, we can trace them, I think, first, to the English side of the New England academies, and secondly, to the English grammar schools of Boston, of which the high school was an extension upward, and in some measure to the Latin School which it paralleled. In one important particular, the example of the Edinburgh school may in all likelihood have reinforced its Boston namesake. From the year 1566 the former institution had been under the direct control and patronage of the city authorities of Edinburgh.¹ It enjoyed a peculiarly close relation with the civic life of the community in which it was established. Both the Latin School and the English High School stood in a like relation with the civic life of the city of Boston. Edinburgh and Boston had many common interests, and pride in institutions of learning under direct municipal control was not the least of these. This relation of the schools to the body politic is worthy of special mention at this point, for it will be found to have great significance in the growth of the high school movement in this country.

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¹ STEVENS, *op. cit.*, p. 13.